



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Albert Balagso

**SUBJECT: OLDER ADULT RESOURCE
SERVICES PROGRAM (OARS)**

DATE: 05-24-06

Approved /s/ Date 05/26/06

BACKGROUND

This memorandum is prepared in response to the Mayor's March Budget Message for 2006-2007 which directed the City Manager to minimize reductions to programs that align with top priorities of the Aging Service Strategic Plan, and to review how the Older Adult Resource Services program (OARS) compares to other senior programs in terms of usage and unduplicated services.

In the 2006-2007 Proposed Budget, there are no reductions to any of the senior programs that align with the top priorities of the Aging Services Strategic Plan. Those two priorities are: information and assistance and transportation.

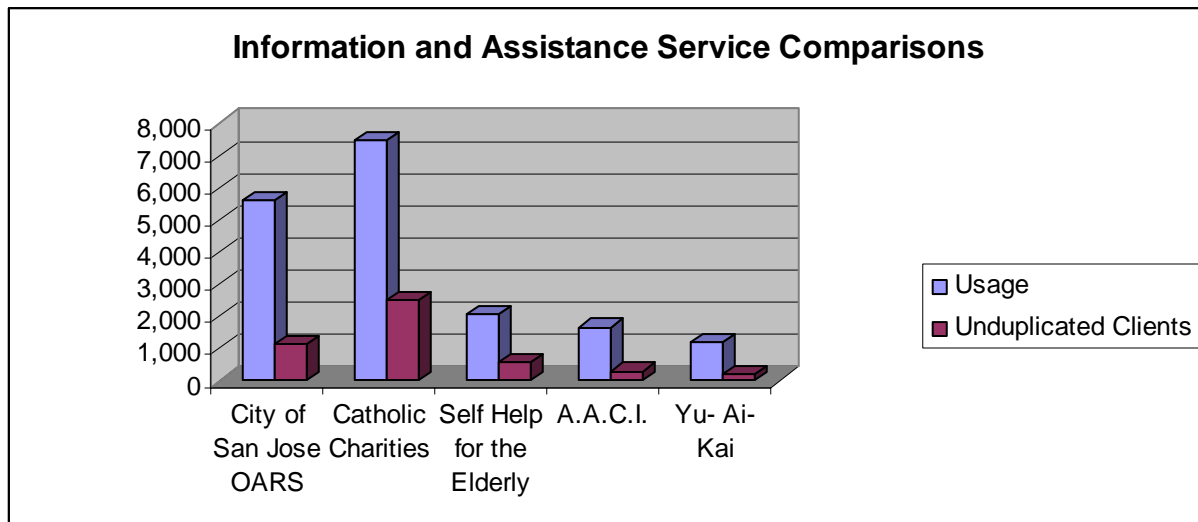
ANALYSIS

Comparison figures for unduplicated counts were only available for 2004-2005. In 2004-2005, the OARS program experienced 25% less usage than Catholic Charities, and served 55% fewer clients than Catholic Charities. However, OARS experienced greater usage and served more unduplicated clients than the three other providers surveyed. A comparison with service providers follows:

FY 2004-2005 Information and Assistance Service Comparisons

Service Providers	Usage	Unduplicated Clients
City of San José OARS	5,593	1,118
Catholic Charities	7,500	2,500
Self Help for the Elderly	2,070	600
Asian Americans for Community Involvement (A.A.C.I)	1,670	300
Yu- Ai- Kai	1,200	200
Council on Aging	Does not disclose information.	
County Dept. of Adult/Aging Services	Does not keep information.	

These comparisons can be graphed as follows:



The OARS program was restructured to address the issues identified in the 2005 Aging Strategic Plan, and to make existing services more accessible to seniors and their families. Changes to the program have included:

- Decentralize the OARS program by having the OARS Specialists schedule information and referral assistance once a week at local senior centers, thus eliminating the need for seniors to find transportation to the Office on Aging. The OARS Specialist spends ½ day per week at each senior center and establishes a rapport with the seniors so they are more comfortable approaching staff when they have an issue or need assistance.
- Establish a Senior Information Telephone Hotline (979-7911). This service provides a unique resource for family members who want to find help for an elderly San José family member. Staff receives over 423 calls per month. This represents four times the number of calls received before establishing the hotline. Assistance for housing, transportation, and care giving (e.g. in-home support services, respite for caregivers) are the top three needs people call in for information about.
- Add a full service Information and Assistance Center to address the critical areas of senior needs. The critical areas of senior needs are: transportation; information; housing; in-home support services; language; caregiver support; health care; Senior Center programs; leadership; and funding.

Resource binders that correspond to each of the ten areas of need identified in the 2005 Aging Strategic Plan were developed. In addition to information, forms for applying for many of the services are also included. An OARS Specialist is available to assist seniors to utilize the binders and to perform Internet searches, make referrals, and perform small needs assessments with seniors and their families. The Senior Employment Center tracked 150 unduplicated client visitations in 2004-2005.

- Provide each Senior/Community Center with updated copies of these resource binders and conducted training of all staff and key volunteers in how to utilize them. Over 100 staff and volunteers have been trained in accessing and delivering Information and Assistance to seniors and their families.
- Establish a countywide Information and Assistance Networking Group for providers to identify and address gaps in service delivery, to eliminate unnecessary duplication of services and to better understand one another's services so a solid safety net can exist. The Information and Assistance Networking Group, which has been meeting quarterly for the last year, has been very effective. Each agency now understands what one another does around the area of Information, Referral and Assistance. Duplication has been eliminated, gaps have been identified, and each agency is able to refer clients to the appropriate agency.

These changes have led to an increase in services provided and increased client use. The estimated number of unduplicated clients and usage for 2005-2006 is expected to increase significantly when compared to last year.

CONCLUSION

We have become a resource for other community partners, such as Council on Aging, as 80% of our clients cannot obtain service from other service providers due to the federal poverty guideline for service requirements imposed by those providers. For example, eighty percent of seniors living in San José don't qualify for case management through Council on Aging. We are able to do an assessment of these seniors and then link them to the services they need to stay living independently. These clients would have gone un-served if they weren't referred to the City of San José.

By the year 2020, the number of residents over the age of 60 will have doubled from what it is today. Coupled with advances in health care and increased life expectancy, the OARS program will be even more critical in linking our older adults to community based services and resources by keeping them active, viable members in their neighborhood and the community. The fastest growing subset of this group is those over the age of 85. They will be most "at risk" and in need of the services provided by OARS.

/s/

Albert Balagso,
Acting Director, Parks, Recreation
and Neighborhood Services